

To: Chairs:  
Friends of Suffolk Archives  
Suffolk Local History Council  
Suffolk Family History Society  
Suffolk Institute of Archaeology & History  
Suffolk Records Society  
Suffolk Archives Foundation

Bury Group  
The Bury Society  
Bury Past & Present  
West Suffolk Council (Chief Executive)  
Bury Town Council (Clerk)

Lowestoft Group  
Port of Lowestoft Research Society  
East Suffolk Council (Chief Executive)  
Lowestoft Town Council (Clerk)

Dear Colleague

**Working Party: Access to Bury St Edmunds & Lowestoft local history collections**

As I am sure you will be aware, the Council has now confirmed that the North-East and West Suffolk branches of the archive service will close. The offices will close to the public before the end of the year and as a result, it is expected that the majority of the branch archives will be transferred to the County's purpose-built strongrooms at The Hold.

Consolidating the three branches into one will help the Council to deliver a service that is better value for taxpayers money in the long term whilst also enabling us to invest in important service improvements for the future such as lunchtime opening and on-the-day productions.

I would like to take this opportunity to assure you that the Council will be happy to advise on any community led proposals to set up alternative archive facilities in your area. Now that the budget proposals have been agreed, I must stress however that we are no longer in a position to fund these, or indeed to enter into further discussions about keeping the current branch services open.

Notwithstanding the above, I know that many residents remain concerned about the transfer of the branch archives to Ipswich and am keen to work with local organisations to help investigate alternative options. With this in mind, I am setting up Working Parties to help consider requests from local depositors who wish to keep their collections based in the area which they originated from and to develop locally led solutions for them to do so.

I am writing to you today to share the Terms of Reference for these groups and to invite you to nominate a representative from your organisation to take part. I am hoping to set up an initial meeting in March and would be grateful if you could confirm the contact details for your chosen representative to [SuffolkArchivesEngagement@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:SuffolkArchivesEngagement@suffolk.gov.uk) by return so that we can send out invitations as soon as possible.

I understand that Cllr Bobby Bennett had also planned to hold a forum for users and stakeholders to help shape the future delivery of the wider service. I am keen to honour this commitment and will be scheduling a separate date for this session shortly.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Philip Faircloth-Mutton'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping flourish at the end.

Philip Faircloth-Mutton  
Cabinet Member for Equality & Communities

## **Terms of Reference**

### **Purpose**

- To share requests from depositors who wish their collections to remain in the local area
- To develop locally led proposals to enable them to do so.
- To identify local studies materials suitable to be hosted locally (if appropriate space and public access is available).

### **Membership**

- There will be two separate Working Parties focussed on the West Suffolk and North-East Suffolk collections respectively.
- The groups will be chaired by Cllr Faircloth Mutton supported by officers from Suffolk Archives.
- Membership of the group will be limited to:
  - o A nominated representative from each of Suffolk's main local history organisations
  - o An officer from the relevant District and Town Councils.
- Depositors who have submitted requests to the County Council for their material to be considered for withdrawal will be invited to take part in the meeting at which their collection will be discussed.

### **Scope**

- The Working Parties will provide a non-political forum to consider requests from depositors who would like their archives to be retained in the local area.
- The Council is only able to consider requests received directly from depositors and will require formal instruction from the depositor before their collection can be discussed by the group.
- The Council has a statutory responsibility to continue to hold all items that have been donated in perpetuity and those kept under the Local Government Act 1972 (or other relevant legislation) . This encompasses the archives for all tiers of local government, manorial, tithe, ecclesiastical parish, and local public records. These collections will automatically be transferred to the Hold which offers the best possible care for material of national significance.

### **Process**

- It is expected that the Working Parties will meet monthly between March and July when a cut-off point will be established for requests from depositors.
- Depositors who have submitted requests for withdrawal will be invited to present details of their collection to the working group for consideration.
- The Working Group will have the opportunity to discuss potential solutions amongst its membership and will be asked to present alternative options to the group at the following meeting.

- The role of Suffolk Archives will be to advise on practical considerations such as environmental management, security, insurance, public access and potential sources of grant funding. Where relevant, the Council will also seek to call in technical advice from external bodies such as The National Archive.

## Flowchart

